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## Abstract

The English Premier League's 'No Room For Racism' campaign is dedicated toward stopping racism in the league, sport, and society as a whole. The campaign is two years old at the time of this publication, and has had several phases. This study examines the campaign from the framework of corporate social responsibility and corporate social advocacy. The stakeholders affected by 'No Room For Racism' are affected and react in differing ways, while using different communication methods in their promotion of the campaign. One key stakeholder, the Premier League's fans, took to social media to express their opinions on the campaign. Their reactions have been sampled and analyzed through this study for content and sentiment. As an evolving campaign, 'No Room For Racism's differing phases have used current events and stakeholder feedback as guidance for the actions taken through the campaign. The actions and impact have been examined through direct communication from stakeholders and articles by the popular press.

## Acknowledgements

University *of* Dayton

# Table of Contents

## Introduction

*No Room For Racism* is an anti-racism campaign started by the English Premier League (EPL) in March 2019. This thesis examines the campaign in the framework of corporate social responsibility and corporate social advocacy by the Premier League and its stakeholders. The actions and communication methods vary for the campaign as the campaign has laid out several different initiatives during various phases, and the campaign evolves in response to emerging racial justice issues. Moreover, the campaign entails different types of involvement and evokes different reactions across stakeholders of the EPL. In this thesis, a systematic analysis on the practices and outcomes of the campaign was performed to better understand the intersections of CSR/CSA, stakeholders, and social justice movements in professional sports.

## The Context – *No Room for Racism*

The *No Room for Racism* campaign was officially launched by the EPL in March 2019. The initial press release by the Premier League on March 30 stated the goal of the campaign was to, "show commitment to equality and diversity, recognising Kick It Out's contribution in tackling discrimination" ("Launches"). The league committed to three main pillars at the time, which were to promote inclusion, do nationwide advertising, and make soccer a welcoming sport ("Launches"). The next phase of the campaign came in October 2019, when the league's primary sponsor EA Sports announced that signage and jerseys in FIFA 20 would feature *No Room For Racism* branding, reaffirming their commitment to the campaign. "EA SPORTS FIFA has continued its pledge to support the Premier League's *No Room For Racism* campaign by launching a new dedicated kit in FIFA20 Ultimate Team," the organization stated (Carmichael, 2019). The next phase

came in June 2020, as the league restarted after pausing due to the COVID-19 pandemic and after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, which sparked worldwide protests. In response to this, the Premier League supported players taking the knee in support of Black Lives Matter once the league resumed play, and 'Black Lives Matter' was worn on the back of players' jerseys during this phase (Associated Press, 2020). The initiatie was then changed to a *No Room For Racism* wristband in September 2020 (Ogden, 2020). The next phase, and the final one before this study was written was in October 2020, when the Premier League shifted focus to reporting racism while also implementing anti-racism education into schools. The league also reaffirmed their message through signage and display during games in October 2020. More phases may continue to be evolving over time.

## Research Questions

This study is guided by two main research questions:

1. Who are the stakeholders involved in the *No Room For Racism* campaign and what are their practices?
2. How have the fans responded to the EPL's #NoRoomForRacism campaign on social media?

## Literature Review

### Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (often abbreviated CSR) has been long researched and debated, with a wide array of perspectives. Much debate around corporate social responsibility revolves around the ethical manner of CSR. Carroll (1979, p. 500) defines CSR as, "The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time."

Society sets certain expectations of business depending on societal issues prevalent at a given point and time, and are often more loyal to the businesses that are perceived as more socially conscious. "The essence of corporate social responsibility is that the companies consciously and voluntarily dedicate themselves to actions which exceed their primary activities aimed at increasing profits" (Stojanovic et al, 158). CSR is viewed by more than the public. As Stojanovic writes, "The company's management efforts in CSR implementation are dually recognized, both as an aspiration for a positive impact on society, employees, a sustainable economy, stakeholders, etc., as well as attempts to overcome barriers to socially responsible activities that result from a lack of information, resources or support. (Stojanovic 158). CSR's implementation is more than public perception. Rather, CSR shows how corporations are affected by the communities in which they operate. The employees within a corporation represent one community, while the issues that CSR addresses and the general public represent the community in which a corporation. In being socially active, corporations find challenges, but overcome them with pressure from both internal and external communities. The purpose of CSR implementation is defined as, "management capabilities to well manage the company and build positive relationships in the company and with the surroundings" (Stojanovic 159).

**Corporate Social Advocacy**

Corporate Social Advocacy is defined by Dodd and Supa as, "a planned and/or ad hoc expression of an organization's stance on controversial social-political issues that spans boundaries between strategic issue management and CSR" (2014). The purpose of CSA is similar to that of CSR. Rim, Lee, and Yoo, state that, "corporate advocacy is intended to influence certain issue frames to generate a publics' favorable perception

toward a company" (2020, p. 2). To get a positive public reaction from CSA is important to corporations. Similar to CSR, CSA positions the company on one side of a controversial political or social issue (Rim, Lee, & Yoo, 2020). While they have similar purposes, CSA is more about the stance on an issue while CSR regards responding to public influence on an issue.

Due to its nature in taking a stand on an issue, CSA creates public reaction quickly as the public decides whether to affirm or reject the organization's stance on an issue. When Starbucks declared a stance in favor of same-sex message, some consumers were supportive of their message while other threated boycotts (Rim, Lee, & Yoo, 2020). Dodd's and Supa's study (2015) showed that the variance between the organization's stance and the consumer's stance on an issue will predict the public reaction to the organization (Rim Lee, & Yoo, 2020). Furthermore, this study shows the social and economic consequences of making decisions related to CSA. Dodd and Supa showed that, "publics sharing their views with the company showed a greater purchase intention, whereas publics who were against the company's stance showed lesser intention to purchase the company's product" (2015, Dodd and Supa 2020). One of the most common reactions to express disagreement with a company's decision is by boycotting those company's products, in an effort to change the company's position on an issue (Sen, Gurham-Canli, and Murwitz, 2001; Yuskel, 2013; Rim, Lee, & Yoo, 2020). Increased public attention to CSA efforts has further increased boycott efforts (Klein et al, 2013; Rim, Lee, & Yoo, 2020).

**Stakeholders in CSR and CSA**

Business practices and operations can also change thanks to institutional pressure from CSR. According to Lourenco and Sousa Filho (2019, p. 550), businesses perceived as socially responsible often maintain support from stakeholders and maintain their place in the market. Incentives remain in the market for socially conscious businesses. Firms that are considered to be unethical are punished through both image and their position in the market (Lourenco and Sousa-Filho, 550). Lourenco and Sousa-Filho further examined the ethical considerations taken through CSR. Jones (1995) determined that corporate social responsibility is ethical or unethical through the nature of the actions taken by the corporations and their dealing with stakeholders (Lourenco and Sousa-Filho, 538). Stakeholders are, "persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present or future" and are classified as primary or secondary based on the participation in the corporation. (Clarkson, 1995, p. 106; Lourenco and Sousa Filho, 539). The secondary stakeholders and primary stakeholders work systematically through the corporation to implement policies based on CSR. A study of Swiss firms published in 2014 determined that secondary stakeholders in a corporation influence primary stakeholders who pressure firms to engage in new socially responsible practices and review the ethics of their current practices (Singh, Jain, and Sharma). The main secondary stakeholder that may have influenced the EPL's CSR/CSA practices is the fans, as the international audience the Premier League could very well affect the organization's practices.

Stakeholders are an important group when being considered regarding CSR and CSA. Taking a side on controversial social issues might polarized stakeholder, with

polarization often dependent on the public's opinion of that issue (Rim, Lee, and Yoo, 2020). Recent examples of this polarization include same-sex marriage and anti-racism campaigns.

While stakeholders can contribute to the polarization of a company on an issue, CSR and CSA are done to satisfy stakeholders. Organizations want to solidify their long-term future through their stakeholders and corporate behavior reflects the needs of those stakeholders (Rin, Lee, and Yoo, 2020; Dowling and Pfieffer, 1975). Communication with stakeholders is essential and reinforces the expectations that companies set out through CSR by which stakeholder are expected to abide. As Lim and Greenwood (2017) write, "The process of CSR stakeholder engagement encompasses the activities of engaging key stakeholders in communication, dialogue and operations, as well as getting consent of the stakeholders" (2017; O'Riordan & Fairbrass, 2014). This trend of engaging stakeholders in CSR earlier and more often has been increasingly practiced in recent years (Lim and Greenwood, 2017). Stakeholder engagement has become a public relations practice and is essential for effectively implementing CSR. Keeping stakeholders engaged outside of just financial benefits has changed organizations relationships with stakeholders, as organizations, "have become increasingly involved in interactive, collaborative, and mutually engaged relationships with stakeholders whose interests may go beyond corporate self-interests" (Lim and Greenwood, 2017). Using public relations and communications to engage stakeholders in CSR efforts will become more important as mediums of communication change, especially across social media. The access varying internal and external stakeholders to multiple communication mediums further emphasizes the need for consistent CSR communication between

stakeholders and organizations. Stakeholder engagement most directly benefits stakeholders that are involved, informed, and participating in ethical and relational actions by the organization (Lin and Greenwood, 2017; Taylor and Kent, 2014).

The stakeholders and their place in the market represent two other communities created by CSR. The stakeholders of a company represent a more internal community as they have tangibles to gain as a part of the organization's work. Primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders further represent sub-communities that can be affected by CSR. The market is an external community, but is a different community from the general public as the market reacts to public perception of an organization's implementation of CSR. Publics and communities can be used in a similar context when talking about CSR. Publics have active involvement around a specific issue and are most motivated to fix the problem (Rim, Lee, and Yoo, 2020).

**CSR/CSA In Sport**

Sport organizations have engaged in corporate social responsibility for years. However, the scope of research has been mostly limited to studying organizations in North America and Europe (Walzel, Robertson, and Anagnostopoulos, 2018). CSR and CSA research has been limited due to more research and public attention focused on poor management practices, scandals, and poor governance (Anagnostopoulos and Papadimitriou, 2017; Walzel, Robertson, and Anagnostopoulos, 2018). CSR in sport is complex, and must be studied beyond the simple framework of economic benefit and public perception. Multiple theories along with increased qualitative research can help further understand the benefits of CSR. Much review as of now is limited to case studies of various sport organizations. For example, in 2013, FC Barcelona attempted to create

peace between Israel and Palestine by doing a peace tour, named the 'Football Club Barcelona Peace Tour 2013.' As one of the most popular and influential soccer clubs in the world, FC Barcelona's CSR are magnified to a greater extent than most other sport organizations. Despite concluding the near impossibility of peace between Israel and Palestine from the tour, "the arguments that were used to justify the tour reinforce the Soccer & Society club's historic motto of being 'more than a club', and in this line, the initiative boosts the club's position within the 'global media sports complex'" (De-San-Eugenio, Ginesta, and Xifra, 2017). The club's efforts attempted to achieve peace through connecting fans' shared bonds across Israel and Palestine, as some citizens of each follow the team religiously (De-San-Eugenio, Ginesta, and Xifra, 2017). The Detroit Lions have built partnership through CSR outreach and attempted to use those partnership to better make change in their community. For example, the Lions created a 'Meet Up and Eat Up' campaign several years ago. The health and wellness campaign, which partnered the Lions with Eastern Market, Playworks, and Wayne State University, helped students learn about healthy and staying active through, "a visit to the farmer's market, cooking lesson with the Lions executive chef, facilitated recess games, and talks by Lions players and medical students about the importance of healthy choices" (Heinze, Soderstrom, and Zdorik, 2014). The Lions also launched the 'Neighboorhood Initiative' to encourage retail at local businesses. Through the initiative, "The Lions and Hatch work together with local shop owners to update signage and publicity for the stores in an effort to encourage more street traffic and shopping in the city" (Heinze, Soderstrom, and Zdorik, 2014). Heinze Soderstrom, and Zdorik note that professional sports teams can, "become agents of broader community development activies" (2014). Community

development has been prevalent in sport organization CSR, especially at the major league level. Studying sport organization's use of community development in relation to CSR can help better understand how organizations better build relationships with the community and both the publicity and economic benefit of CSR in sport.

CSR has always been prevalent in sport just as in non-sport business entities. Sport has similar stakeholders and looks to benefits financial considerations and public image the same as corporate businesses who use CSR. Soccer is no exception to CSR. English soccer has had its share of systemic issues, including racism, financial divide between clubs, and increasing ticket prices for supporters (Breitbarth and Harris, 2008, p. 193). CSR in soccer (and likely sport as a whole) differs from traditional corporate CSR as CSR in soccer focuses more on community involvement. With sport organizations able to connect more closely with a local community than a national corporate brand, the soccer clubs can be more heavily involved in the community. As Breitbarth and Harris write, "there is the potential to leverage and use the power of brands of professional clubs corporate Social Responsibility in the Football Business" (2008, p. 193). One example of corporate social responsibility in English soccer is the Arsenal Double Club, which provided an educational program through the club (Breitbarth and Harris, 2008). The local community benefited through Arsenal in this case. Anti-racism or any other societal or political issue can be addressed through CSR because, "the governmental call for football as a partner in community development offers professional football the chance to integrate the public agenda with its own organizational goals through self-enlightened CSR that brings the modern game back to the English community through community involvement (Breitbarth and Harris, 2008, Pendry, 2000). English soccer is ultimately a

stakeholder in influencing the British government to take action. By aligning itself with public opinion, soccer clubs all over the world can engage in CSR, even influencing governmental action in some instances.

**Criticisms to CSR/CSA**

The literature also finds that corporate social responsibility is subject to criticism, including within academic research. In 2002, Cheryl L. Wade wrote a critique in the Tulane Law Review around CSR, empathy, and racial justice. Wade argued that corporations simply being empathetic to the consequences of racism does not help improve racial justice. Wade writes, "White managers and directors, successful themselves, are not likely to understand the impediments to success faced by many people of color" (p. 1461). Wade also suggested that the definition of CSR does not include the impact on social well-being or stakeholders (2017; p. 1193). She cautions against confusing CSR with corporate governance, which Wade defines in terms of the legal standards and precedent as a result of CSR (2017, p. 1191). CSR and corporate social governance ultimately work together, with internal stakeholders seeing the most change in their workforce. As Wade writes, "In these definitions, there is an obvious overlap between corporate governance and corporate social responsibility in the inclusion of stakeholders, including the community, when defining both concepts" (2017, p. 1194).

Other scholars see CSR as a public relations tactic to mitigate past societal harms. Bonsu (2020), framed CSR as a deceptive advertising practice that may actually be harmful to either the health or financial well-being of consumers. Bonsu's piece uses case studies from Volkswagen and Purdue Pharma. In the Volkswagen scandal, the company ultimately cheated emissions standards, costing the company billions of dollars, despite

advertising their new cars as reducing nitrogen oxide emissions (Bonsu, 2020; Jacobs and Kalbers, 2019; Atiyeh, 2019). In the Purdue Pharma scandal, "Purdue Pharma falsely claimed the risk of addiction of OxyContin was less than one percent thus less likely to be abused by patients" (Bonsu, 2020; Maier, 2003). This proved detrimental to human health by causing overdoses and has contributed to the opioid crisis in several states today (Bonsu, 2020). This critique views CSR as a tactic driven by economic incentive, rather than genuine concentration on the well being of citizens, the environment, and societal structures. As Bonsu writes, "Avoiding legal charges as a result of the harmful consequences associated with the process of production and the products and services, the increase in demand by the public as a result of their recognition and support of the ethical and philanthropic virtues of a company will yield positive economic returns" (2020). CSR's lack of addressing public health concerns has been noted by other scholars. Hiswals, Hamlin, Vidman, and Macassa argue businesses must be engaged in, " This would mean businesses aiming to be involved in public health initiatives beyond the workplace, in order to also improve health and wellbeing across the entire value chain including suppliers, local communities, the general public, and the environment" (2020, p. 28). The authors of the aforementioned piece critique CSR's implementation through the potential opportunity created by using CSR to address public health. Their article states, "This article argues that CSR initiatives present a unique opportunity for businesses to target external stakeholders and help to address the most important societal challenges, especially the social determinants of health which are the root causes of inequities in health" (Hiswals, Hamlin, Videman, and Macassa, 2020, p. 29). Critiques of

CSR are viewed through many different frameworks, some of which focus on society as a whole, while others focus on a specific area CSR may have missed.

**Methods**

Two different elements were studied in this case study: corporate social responsibility practices and social media reactions. While each element was an integral part of the English Premier League's *No Room For Racism* campaign, each element took on a different method. For the corporate social responsibility and advocacy aspects, the actions of different stakeholders were the focal point of research. These actions were best conveyed through analyzing popular press articles and releases by different stakeholders. Many releases were subsequently promoted through social media by the stakeholders during the campaign. Social media reactions were addressed through both manual data collection and coding for sentiment, along with concept-mapping via the data-mining tool Leximancer.

RQ1 was addressed through analyzing popular press articles, press releases, social media posts, and website content at different stages of the campaign. The data was collected in order to understand which stakeholders were most involved in different stages of the campaign, and what practices were implemented by each stakeholder. Popular press articles were analyzed to gain background information on each phase and practice of the campaign. These articles came from UK press (e.g. Sky Sports), US press, and international outlets. Furthermore, quotes from stakeholders were used in several of these articles which was used to understand how individual stakeholders felt about the campaign and the sentiment around racism as a whole. Press releases were analyzed for a

more direct analysis of the goals of the campaign's phases, along with how each stakeholder was willing to support the campaign. Press releases from stakeholders provided more direct information which may have been missed by the popular press. Social media posts were analyzed through examining posts(most especially Twitter) using #NoRoomForRacism by stakeholders during the campaign. A content analysis of several posts showed how each stakeholder coordinated to promote *No Room For Racism* and its initiatives. Content included text, videos, graphics, and links to the stakeholder's website or release. Analysis was used to examine coordination in the content itself, timing of content, and connection of sentiment in support of the Premier League's goals and initiatives.

RQ2 focuses on fans' reaction towards the campaign, as fans are an important stakeholder in the Premier League's operations. To best gauge the fans' reactions in a short amount of time, a sample of comments were collected from the campaign at its major checkpoints. In average, a number of 20-30 replies were collected and examined for text and overall sentiment from Premier League fans under each Premier League Tweet. Additional consideration was given to the hashtags used by some fans. In total, a sample of 301 replies to the Premier League's official account (@premierleague) were collected manually and added to a spreadsheet, with the different dates of the Tweets reflecting different checkpoints. After the text was collected from these Tweets, the social media data mining and analysis tool Leximancer was used to analyze concepts among the replies from Premier League fans. Leximancer was used to gather concept data in a previous study examining the Twitter feud between Megan Rapinoe and former president Donald Trump over the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team's decision not to visit the

White House in 2019 (Frederick, Pegoraro, and Schmidt, 2020). These concepts were then visualized and analyzed through Leximancer's software. The analysis through Leximancer examined the most common topics from fans from the sample size, along with how each topic was interrelated. Both main themes and subtopics were examined through Leximancer's data collection. In addition to text collection for analysis through Leximancer, manual data collection analyzed the overall sentiment of each reaction from the fan. An agreeable or complementary reaction in response to a Premier League #NoRoomForRacism Tweet was marked as 'positive,' an inflammatory, hostile, or otherwise adverse reaction to a Premier League Tweet was marked as 'negative,' and Tweets which mixed positive or negative sentiment, commented on a political/social issue unrelated to the campaign, or was otherwise inconclusive or did not react to the campaign was marked as 'neutral/mixed.' Each category was totaled to analyze the overall sentiment of fans towards the campaign as a whole along with different phases.

**Results**

RQ1 had three main findings. The first finding established that the primary stakeholders in *No Room For Racism* are the Premier League and executive management, teams, coaches and players, and sponsors and partners. Fans are the main secondary stakeholder in this study. The second finding is that stakeholders were coordinated in their practices and methods of communication in supporting *No Room For Racism* and its goals. The third and final finding from RQ1 was that different phases added different initiatives, in responding to emerging and evolving social issues/events related to racial justice. These new initiatives created different practices by the Premier League, with

some focused around communicating initiatives while other practices took further actions. Additionally, some phases were notable for actions by individual stakeholders such as EA Sports, while others were better known for its initiatives, such as focusing on education. The main finding for RQ2 was that fans were mixed in their sentiment towards the campaign's initiatives, with some initiatives receiving more positive feedback than others. Through Leximancer data collection, main themes centered around the league, racism itself, Black Lives Matter, and political/social issues.

Research question one concerned the various practices used in promotion of the *No Room For Racism* campaign by primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders were established as stakeholders who could directly influence direction of the campaign while secondary stakeholders have less influence and could most often simply react to goals and initiatives, but are prevalent nonetheless.

**TABLE 1: Primary And Secondary Stakeholders**

| Primary Stakeholders | <ul><li>Premier League and executive management</li><li>Teams</li><li>Coaches and Players</li><li>Sponsors and Partners (especially EA Sports, Kick It Out)</li></ul> |
|---|---|
| Secondary Stakeholders | <ul><li>Fans</li></ul> |

Additionally, the research found the campaign practices were coordinated among stakeholders, most especially through social media posts and press releases. Social media posts using #NoRoomForRacism were found across all phases of the campaign from multiple clubs, along with some players as well. Players and coaches also have appeared in video content posted by the Premier League expressing support for the campaign. The EPL, its clubs, and EA Sports have consistently published press releases showing both

support for the campaign in general along with supporting new phases of the campaign. The Premier League organized Twitter posts from stakeholders posted on October 16, 2020 showing support for the newest phase of the campaign.

Lastly, the research also found evolving and changing focal themes of the campaign. At the time of this research, *No Room For Racism* featured four main phases. Each phase had a main theme as part of the overarching campaign. Initiatives were continually added and/or changed for each phase dependent on the focus of the Premier League and its stakeholders during each phase.

**TABLE 2: Campaign Timeline, Significance, And Initiatives**

| Phase | Main Significance | Initiatives |
|---|---|---|
| March 2019 | Launch of Campaign | Promote inclusion, nationwide advertising, and making soccer more inclusive |
| October 2019 | EA Sports Support | Reinforcement of campaign, signage |
| June 2020 | Support for Black Lives Matter | Allow players to take knee, Black Lives Matter on back of jerseys (discontinued Sep. 2020) |
| October 2020 | Focus on fans | Reporting hotlines, encourage reporting racism on social media, implement anti-racism education |

RQ2 examined how fans responded on social media to the campaign, particularly focusing on Twitter. Through manual text data collection, 301 Tweets were collected and analyzed for sentiment related to the campaign's efforts, before using the text to determine the most common subjects among fans. The three categories for sentiment were positive, negative and neutral/mixed.

**TABLE 3: Sentiment of Manual Collection Sample**

| Sentiment | Total Tweets | Percentage of Sample |
|---|---|---|
| Positive | 98 | 32.6% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Negative | 102 | 33.9% |
| Neutral/mixed | 101 | 33.6% |
| **Total Tweets** | **301** | **100.0%** |

Leximancer data showed several different trends and how each trend was interconnected. The Premier League and racism were the main themes of data collection (left), while key subtopics included referees, media companies, and use of #EndSARS (right).
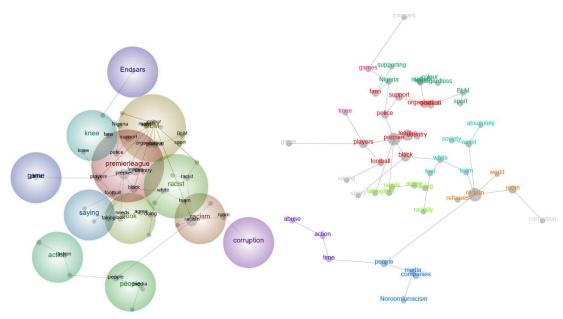


*Figure 1: Leximancer Themes*

## Discussion

### Stakeholders and Coordination

As determined by the first finding of the study, the primary stakeholders of the study are the Premier League/executive management, players and coaches, clubs, and sponsors. The main secondary stakeholder for this study are the Premier League fans. The primary stakeholders are distinguished from the secondary stakeholders in this study based on the amount of leverage and direct decision-making they hold in the campaign. The Premier League created and implemented the campaign, so they take a clear status as a primary stakeholder. Other primary stakeholders have influenced the campaign in each

phase through both action and communication. EA Sports took the lead in the October 2019 phase by implementing *No Room For Racism* branding in FIFA 20 (this was continued in FIFA 21) and as the league's main sponsor is a primary stakeholder. As an anti-racism partner, Kick It Out is also a primary stakeholder. The players, coaches, and clubs have consistently engaged in implementing and communicating the goals and initiatives of the campaign. Players most notably do so in June 2020 as the league affirmed its support for Black Lives Matter and allowed for players to take the knee before games, which is still done today. Fans are defined as a secondary stakeholder because they are only able to react to the initiatives put out by the Premier League, rather than directly implement them. The fans may have some influence in terms of making change to the campaign through their feedback, but by-in-large can only react to *No Room For Racism*, or any CSR/CSA position.

The primary stakeholders in this study coordinated through affirming support for the campaign and its initiatives, which was most present when communicated through press releases and through posts on social media. On social media, posts with #NoRoomForRacism can be found across all phases of the campaign from all primary (and some secondary) stakeholders. These posts reflect a commitment to the Premier League's agenda around *No Room For Racism* and a commitment to the changes made as the campaign enters new phases. There is much reason to expect that this commitment will continue as the campaign continues into newer phases. Press releases encompassed both affirming support of goals and initiatives and communicating how specifically a stakeholder will support the campaign. For example, Manchester City wrote in support of the October 2020 phase, stating:

And as part of its long-term commitment to address racism in football and wider society, the League is also launching a series of new educational resources featuring Manchester City and England full-back Demi Stokes along with Dominic Calvert-Lewin, Neal Maupay, Divock Origi, Hamza Choudhury, Manchester City Women's player Demi Stokes.

The players discuss their own experiences of discrimination, the impact it has had on them and their team-mates and how we all have a responsibility to tackle racism.

These free teaching materials are designed to help stimulate discussion in classrooms and will be available to more than 18,000 primary schools in England and Wales through Premier League Primary Stars.

The resources will also be made available via the Premier League Kicks and Inspires programmes" (Manchester City).

Not only were press releases use to communicate support for initiatives, but were also used to communicate how the campaign would be advertised, as exemplified by this West Ham release from March 2019:

The 2019 No Room for Racism campaign, which kicks-off today and will run until Monday 8 April, will make clear that racism is not acceptable in our competition or the wider sport. It will also celebrate diversity across the Premier League and our clubs, and recognise the significant contribution made by Kick It Out in tackling discrimination since they were formed 25 years ago.

West Ham are backing both No Room for Racism and Kick It Out as part of the Club's wider commitment to equality, inclusion and diversity in everything we do.

The campaigns' anti-racism messaging will be evident across the Club's digital and social media channels, while you can read more about West Ham. United in Saturday's Official Programme for the Premier League fixture with Everton. (West Ham United).

These types of press releases are prevalent throughout the entirety of the campaign. In some cases, a stakeholder would release a statement on behalf of another, such as this release from the Premier League announcing EA Sports' support for the campaign through FIFA 20.

EA SPORTS FIFA 20 has announced it is giving its full support to the Premier League's No Room For Racism campaign, with branding appearing in-game.

The No Room For Racism campaign will be visible at all Premier League matches from Saturday 19 to Sunday 27 October.

EA SPORTS, the Lead Partner of the League, is giving its FIFA 20 players the chance to add their backing.
FIFA 20 players will soon see the campaign supported in-game, with special FUT Kits, stadium dressing and LED boards all carrying the No Room for Racism message over the coming months.

Jesse Lingard is an EA SPORTS FIFA 20 Ambassador and is proud to support the campaign alongside EA SPORTS FIFA.

"'Racism is not and never will be acceptable in sport or society," Lingard said. "Everyone has the right to feel safe and included.'" (FIFA 20).

Last, stakeholders showed coordination by supporting each other's efforts, with some of this reflected through press releases. An example of this is shown through Manchester United's press release supporting pro-Black Lives Matter initiatives by the players:

Manchester United has given its full support to a powerful statement against racism made by players from all 20 Premier League clubs and backed plans to display anti-racism messages on club shirts when games resume next week.
In a joint-statement, Premier League players said: "We, the players, stand together with the singular objective of eradicating racial prejudice wherever it exists, to bring about a global society of inclusion, respect, and equal opportunities for all, regardless of their colour or creed. (Manchester United).

Through press releases, not only were goals and objectives communicated, but stakeholders used this method to support each other's efforts. By supporting each other's efforts through quotes and communication, coordination has been shown among the primary stakeholders of the English Premier League. Each primary stakeholder clearly stated their support for the campaign in its goals and initiatives, and this is likely to continue into future phases of *No Room for Racism*.

**Social media initiatives**

Social media is an important communication tool for any organization. Unlike press releases, where communication is one-way from primary stakeholders, social media allows for both primary stakeholders to deliver messages while secondary stakeholders such as fans are able to react to these messages. Primary stakeholders were able to coordinate to deliver their messages and support one another through the phases of the campaign that were examined. This was especially the case on Twitter, where #NoRoomForRacism, while not specifically the Premier League's hashtag, was used to convey a message of support for the campaign and other stakeholders in implementing the campaign. Using #NoRoomForRacism has happened throughout all phases of the campaign across all primary stakeholders, oftentimes communicating goals and initiatives, with some Tweets using a specific incident to reinforce initiatives, such as a player being racially abused.



*Figure 2: #NoRoomForRacism Tweets Over Time*

One of the biggest social media coordination examples was done on October 16, 2020. The Premier League organized Tweets among primary stakeholders to roll out their then newest phase of the campaign. Each Tweet used #NoRoomForRacism and either used an accompanying video with players talking about why this phase of the campaign is important, or simply posted a *No Room For Racism* graphic. Nearly every club is featured in this Twitter launch and some clubs even used social media to post links to

press releases, which furthered their support of the new phase. Most clubs used the Premier League's slogan for the October 2020 addition, "challenge it, report it, change it," which encompassed one of the key initiatives of the phase, reporting racial abuse at matches and on social media (Premier League et. al. via Twitter). Some clubs even added a player saying this phrase as well.
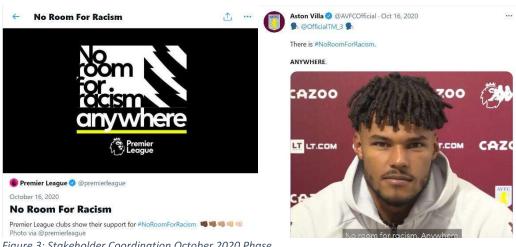


*Figure 3: Stakeholder Coordination October 2020 Phase*

How the initiatives have been communicated on social media was the biggest finding from this study. Each stakeholder had the ability to produce their own content, yet the same goals and initiatives were conveyed, although the content produced somewhat varied (there has been some similarity among the content, especially reflected in the October 2020 phase). The actions taken through the campaign were not changed through social media by the primary stakeholders, but merely communicated. As a mass communication outlet, the methods used by the Premier League and its stakeholders were conveyed in such a way to show unity across the players, clubs, and league, with more support from sponsors and partners. Communication of this support happened in

coordination with one another, but was also done individually by stakeholders in coordination with the league's goals at the time.

**Social Media Reactions**

Analysis of social media showed a mixed sentiment among fans. Certain phases of the campaign had more negative reactions than others, most notably the June 2020 phase of the campaign in which the league support players taking the knee in support of BLM. Some fans were disgruntled based on perception that Black Lives Matter was a political organization and believed the league was using *No Room For Racism* to support political organizations. One Twitter user stated on the league's actions, "keep politics out of OUR national game will you also support players that don't want to 'take the knee' but are being forced to by yet more virtue signalling nonsense and yes, they are being forced to as they know the repercussions if they don't" (@chrisharper1968 via Twitter). Other Twitter users went so far as to call Black Lives Matter a terrorist organization or mention that players were not allowed to wear the poppy in support of the British military. Another criticism was that *No Room For Racism* did not go far enough in addressing racism in its initiatives, including abuse toward players and referees.

Other social media users expressed more positive reactions, including the initial launch of the campaign and the rollout of the October 2020 campaign. Positive comments both praised the campaign's initiatives and directly reflected the sentiment of the Premier League. Replies as simple as 'good job' or even hand-clapping emojis were still a positive sentiment. Reflecting the sentiment of the campaign included Tweets such as, "I don't understand how someone can be a fan of the greatest sport [in the world], yet be a

racist (@JKSaysHi via Twitter). Another example of positive sentiment is active participation in the campaign's initiatives, which was most commonly reflected by some accounts directly tagging the league and asking to report a racist Tweet from another fan, or expressing sympathy toward a player who had racial epithets directed at him.

Neutral and mixed reactions included topics such as inquiring about why there were no black referees, expressing both positive and negative sentiment in the same reaction, or not reacting directly to the campaign whatsoever. Not only did fans react to Premier League #NoRoomForRacism Tweets through a variety of topics, but also used the campaign to express political and social statements. One of the most prevalent examples of political and social expression was the use of #EndSARS by Nigerian fans in response to police brutality. This expression coincided with the October 2020 phase of *No Room For Racism*. Twitter and social media as a whole serves as a mass communication outlet for fans to freely express political and social statements. This allowed for political movements such as #EndSARS to be expressed by fans who felt the Premier League's #NoRoomForRacism campaign could help amplify their position, especially as a new phase of *No Room For Racism* happened at the height of #EndSARS.

The mixed reactions by fans toward the campaign means that the league has influenced some fans to take action or express sympathy towards their goals and initiatives, while other fans have been resistant. Fans possess much power as a secondary stakeholder as they invest in the league through watching matches, buying tickets and merchandise, and joining supporters clubs among other methods. In most cases, the leagues initiatives have been satisfactory toward which fan investment was not deterred by the primary stakeholder's actions as whole. While some fans took positive interest and

action in the league's goals, others used social media expressing frustration with this particular CSR/CSA initiative, with some even saying they will not be watching. *No Room For Racism*, just like other CSR/CSA initiatives relating to racial justice in sports, risks losing fan revenue when fans do not agree with their initiatives, a factor which the EPL and its stakeholders will have to consider in future phases of the campaign.

## Limitations

One limitation to this study was that manual data collection was needed due to a lack of funding and/or needed data from social media data mining sites. In the study by Frederick, Pegoraro, and Schmidt (2020), a study which used the same Leximancer concept map tool used in this study, the company Meltwater was used to quickly gather and organize Twitter data related to their topic. However, despite services that would go above and beyond what was needed for this study, Meltwater's services were very much out of the allotted budget for this project. The total dataset for Frederick, Pegoraro, and Schmidt was n = 16,137, while this study relied on a manually-collected dataset of 301 replies (2020). Not only did manual data collection create a smaller sample-size, but was more time-consuming and required a more targeted collection of Twitter data, rather than a more generalized sample over a couple of years, or the life of the #NoRoomForRacism campaign. While clear trends were shown by the manual data collection and subsequent Leximancer data mining, being able to use a social media data-mining site, especially one with the services of Meltwater would have allowed for a larger, more generalized sample size over all of the phases of the campaign.

Another limitation is trolling/abuse by fans on social media. The type of trolling used most often by fans on Twitter in replies to the Premier League's #NoRoomForRacism Tweets is known as subcultural trolling. Subcultural trolling is defined by DiFranco as expressing attitudes that they believe are most likely to distract and provoke their targets (2020; Phillips 2015). This type of trolling was done by fans including by simply saying the Premier League is corrupt without context, criticizing referees for a call on the field, or by criticizing or engaging in banter. While all of these were replies to the Premier League's post around an anti-racism campaign, these replies' subjects were in no way related to anti-racism or the *No Room For Racism* campaign. Manual data collection and coding could filter out some of these Tweets, however not all could be filtered, and this ultimately created a distraction for the message the league was trying to convey. The sentiment of the fans toward this campaign was distracted by these subcultural trolls, who used the platform to disrupt the communication of both the league and the fans directly reacting to *No Room For Racism*. Bias was not necessarily shown against the Premier League, its fans, or the *No Room For Racism* campaign by these trolls, but served as an impediment to data collection in terms of gauging the content and the sentiment of the fans towards the campaign.

## Implications For Future Research

*No Room For Racism* is an ongoing campaign and will likely enter new phases with new and additional objectives from the Premier League and its stakeholders. Preliminary research of February and March 2021 Tweets from the Premier League shows a commitment to promote the campaign on social media, and use the campaign as

an anti-racism outlet in both soccer and in society as a whole. This particular campaign is not likely to end or rebrand in the near future with the Premier League's international influence and the recognizability and connectivity of the Premier League to the *No Room For Racism* campaign. How initiatives relate to current events has been exemplified by the league's response to George Floyd's death and Black Lives Matter uprising. Future case studies of other racial bias incidents could spark further actions by Premier League stakeholders, including in address racism outside of bias targeting Black people. New stakeholders which partner with the Premier League will be an important factor as to the specific initiatives taken by the league to enter new phases and create new goals for the campaign. New and old communication outlets should also be further studied to determine methods of promoting *No Room For Racism* and other racial justice initiatives by the English Premier League.

**Conclusion**

*No Room For Racism* is unique in both putting a name to an anti-racism initiatives, and the varying phases of the campaign that feed into its new initiatives. Sports teams and leagues have done many anti-racism initiatives in terms of corporate social responsibility, especially when a triggering event happens that sparks public outrage. The Premier League's initiatives were communicated and supported by multiple stakeholders and done through all phases of the campaign, and can continue to be expected for future campaigns. Press releases, social media, popular press, website content, videos and graphics and direct interviews with stakeholders all served as outlets to discuss *No Room For Racism* and the goals of the campaign. Corporate social

responsibility is used both inside and outside of soccer by the Premier League and corporate social advocacy allowed for the league to take a stance. Fans reacted on social media in a variety of ways, often depending on the initiatives supported and implemented by the league. With so many stakeholders involved, the Premier League both had to support the will of the stakeholders, while also considering whether its business interests would be significantly affected. As one of the most popular sports leagues in the world with an international outreach, the English Premier League will cause many reactions with its corporate social responsibility initiatives.

This study shows how coordination among stakeholders and using triggering events in terms of supporting established initiatives makes the Premier League's *No Room For Racism* campaign unique as compared to other racial justice initiatives in sport. The communication outlets and fan reactions on social media are similar to other initiatives based on the perception of an organization from the initiatives which are proposed and implemented. As fans return to limited and full capacity, time will tell how effective the Premier League has been in implementing its initiatives through *No Room For Racism*. As new phases of the campaign begin and primary stakeholders demand changes to be made, new initiatives will target specific problems in addressing racism in soccer and society as a whole.

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